

A Fuller Life: Dolores Fuller with Stone Wallace and Phillip Chamberlin by John T. Soister

I had the pleasure of meeting Dolores Fuller at a Chiller or Fanex or something 15 or 20 years ago, and I remember her being as quite amiable & more than willing to reminisce about Ed Wood and the gang while she was inscribing to me a couple of the 8x10s she was selling. It was in conjunction with Ed and the gang that I had pigeonholed Ms. Fuller -- this was before the release (and, more likely, before the conception) of Tim Burton's epic pseudo-bio-documentary -- and I had knowledge of no other common group which the lady and I could share. Would that I had had this book!

A Fuller Life is chock-a-block with Ms. Fuller's accounts of her career hits and misses, her sexual escapades (recounted in so chaste a fashion that one can only conclude that she must be part British), her husbands (at least five to date, with Phillip Chamberlin hanging in there as of this writing), her friends, (fellow Wood-Star Mona McKinnon gets a good bit of ink), her lovers (most -- but not all -- of the men she didn't either marry or befriend, or both), and -- for want of another man -- miscellaneous information. We learn, for example, on the second page of autobiographical text, that Ms. Fuller "was blessed by genes and Mother Nature with a good bone structure, great legs, erect 5'5" posture, a high bust of 34DD cup, a 25-inch waist and 36-inch hips." I had to stop right there and lay down for a while. (Nonetheless, my brother, a breast man from way back, maintains that -- based on the memorable scene wherein Ms. Fuller hands over her angora sweater to Mr. Wood in Glen or Glenda? and is left there, for the world to see, clad not only in a bra that might have seen action in early 1950s production of *Gotterdammerung* -- was no DD. I opined that perhaps the DD was irrevocably altered at the same time that the noun "liberal" came to mean "traitorous scumbag"; to no avail.)

Happily, Ms. Fuller's life has been quite full, with Ed Wood and the gang having played only a small part in that happiness. Less happily, the structure of *A Fuller Life* leaves much to be desired, as BearManor Media -- the publisher -- appears to be badly in need of a decent editor. (Who is this Stone Wallace? His name graces the book's front cover, along with Mr. Chamberlin's.) The textual flow is at once chronological and topical, with critical references to the aforementioned Tim Burton picture popping up hither, thither and yon, rather capriciously. This is hardly earth-shattering, of course -- and, frankly, said references are golden to fans like me, as are recurring bitchy mention mentions of Sara "Jurassic" Parker -- and one could argue that Ms. Fuller has opted to deliver the goods via a barge on the stream-of-consciousness; still, the reader comes away feeling that the lady as lived her in in meticulously linear fashion.

Page -long paragraphs -- more egregious than soft-focus narrative -- are commonplace, and several paragraphs, run-on for nearly two full pages, catch one's eye while challenging the memory. Photographs seem to have been inserted rather haphazardly into the text, and several tantalizing mysteries: the text under the photo page 164, for example, reveals that "Writer Mark Barkan worked with me for 6 months on the Batman project, still to be released. Holy WTF Batman! Where did that come from? Then too, on page 182, we have a photo of a smiling singer, identified in the caption as "Ronnie Fuller" but in the text as Ronnie Beasaw, who "had buck teeth so pronounced he would hide them behind the microphone." It's not until page 213 that we learn that the singer "in appreciation, had professionally adopted my surname in exchange for Beasaw."

Gaffes, misspellings and redundancies float through the volume, and the index -- which lists only the aforementioned picture of Mr. Barkman and not the (non-Batman) reference to him on another page and which ignores Mr. Beasaw's natal surname altogether -- is worse than useless. Still, the body of Ms.

Fuller's book (which never strays too far from celebrating Ms. Fuller's body) it is pleasant enough. With all due respect, though, could the average genre buff care less about the lady's shtupping Frank Sinatra ("He was short, he was skinny, and I didn't find him particularly attractive?) Or her canoodling with George Raft, or Johnny Carson, or Samuel Goldwyn? Okay, it was Samuel Goldwyn, Junior, with whom our heroine was dallying, but that was while she was also having her way "The Judge: (the "man I should have married" per one of those informative photo captions) and Martin Leeds, an industry executive with whom she was cheating on "The Judge." You go, girl!

There's lots on the lady's successes as a composer of pop tunes, quite a bit on both her state career (chiefly at Westboro, Massachusetts' Red Barn Summer Theater) and her tenure as a model (a size 4-and-a-half foot led her to bigger things, and a wealth of detail on her turn as discoverer of/agent for sundry appreciative performers who remain unheralded to this, and ungrateful swine (like Tanya Tucker), whom she brought to the edge of stardom, only to have them abandon her, a la Broadway Danny Rose. The book's penultimate chapter is entitled "Ed Wood posthumously re-enters Show Buz: and it alone is worth the price of the work, if only to fans of Crossroads of Laredo (1948), which I thought was a steroided reworking of Crossroads Avenger (1953), infused with a health dose of...ummm...necrophilia. Which it may well be. I'm not sure.

I'm not sure of anything in the book, actually, other than Ms. Fuller has nothing good to say about Ms. Jurassic Parker. The blonde enchantress on the front cover certainly doesn't resemble the Dolores Fuller from the Ed Wood days, and I don't recall this airbrushed beauty being the woman with whom I shared a chuckle or two and to whom I forked over #29 bucks or so decades ago. The gal on the back cover, though, replete with Brunnhilde-bra and angora pullover...that's the Dolores Fuller I've watched on video. That's the Barbara and the Margie that I "remember".

Nonetheless, for all those with better recall or more catholic interests than I, Ms. Fuller's memoirs are sure to please.